

Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**CORNING EAST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2014) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Jessica Lawson of Corning East High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Lawson is the first Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Corning East High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Lawson as New York's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Lawson joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-2 freshman raced to the New York Federation Championship this past season with a time of 18:16.2. Lawson also won the Class B state championship, breaking the tape in 17:42.7, and captured the Section 4 and Southern Tier Athletic Conference titles. She finished seventh at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and 27th nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Lawson has maintained an A average in the classroom. An active member of the 4H Club and a talented musician, she has volunteered locally on behalf of a Christmas food basket program for the needy.

"Historically, our section hasn't had a lot of success at the state level, but she rose to the occasion this year," said Ben Cardamone, coach at rival Elmira High. "You couldn't have scripted a better race than the one she ran at Federations. She's a girl who works hard at everything and does the things great runners need to do to be successful."

Lawson will begin her sophomore year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Lawson joins Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Bella Burda (2012-13, Arlington High School), Jillian Fanning (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11 & 2009-10, Cornwall Central High School), and Emily Lipari (2008-09 & 2007-08, Roslyn) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

###